



# Cultural Contribution of Nur Jahan

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**Abstract** - Bagh-i-Bahar Ara was laid out by the Nur Jahan Begum in 1623 A.D. The site of this garden was the western side of the Dal Lake at Sadurkhun. Achabals was one of the favourite resorts of Nur Jahan. Nur Bagh was also laid out by Nur Jahan on the eastern bank of the river Jhelum. Nur Jahan also provided patronage to several other gardens. Thus, Nur Jahan was a versatile lady, who contributed a great deal in the field of art and architecture.

**Keywords** - Cultural, Contribution, Nur Jahan, Bagh-i-Bahar, provided , patronage.

Nur Jahan the daughter of Mirza Ghiyas Beg, a Persian noble who came to India in search of fortune during the time of Emperor Akbar. Nur Jahan's real name was Mehr-un-Nisa. On occasion of Nauroz in 1611 A.D. Jahangir saw Mehr-un-Nisa and fell in love with her. Two months after this meeting, the two of them got married on 25<sup>th</sup> May, 1611 A.D. Mehr-un-Nisa was now called Nur Mahal (Light of the palace). In 1616 A.D. Jahangir gave her the title of Nur Jahan (light of the world). In 1622 A.D, she won the title of 'Padshah Begum' (The first lady of the realm). Nur Jahan was a learned Mughal women of Jahangir's time, she was highly cultured, educated, talented and exceedingly beautiful. She was a lady of literary excellence. She was gifted with a poetic nature and wrote extempore verses. She was a highly educated lady with a mind singularly gifted and able. She was skilled in political matters and was equally gifted in literature too. By these unique abilities she blossomed like a lovely flower and her mind unfolded with the beauty of her face and figure. She was well-versed in Persian and Arabic literature.

In the company of Jahangir, Nur Jahan Begum Begum composing sober and thought provoking poetry. She composed verses in the Persian language which carried natural outflow of her emotions, dependency, suffering and Sufi sentiments. Nur Jahan's verses, also called poetry of high order, are proof enough for her talent in the field. She too, like Salima Sultana, wrote under the pen-name of 'Makhfi' (concealed).

She had a keen interest in collecting books and had her personal library. She was active in organizing poetic competitions during her time in the royal courts. In these competitions, also known as Muhaira, many celebrated poets from far and wide participated. The most celebrated poet to grace the royal Mushairas convened by Nur Jahan begum was Qasim Khan another son-in-law of Mirza Ghiyas Beg. Thus, Nur Jahan's outstanding contributions towards the literary field, as in many other fields, certainly made her one of, or perhaps, the leading and most remarkable royal lady of the Mughai dynasty in India. Thus well versed in Persian literature she composed verses glimpsed and flowing which assisted her in capturing the heart of her husband. She discarded the old designs of dresses which were inconvenient to wear and designed new patterns.

These new clothes were available for both the royalty and the common people. Several new model and stitches were invented by Nur Jahan. In place of the peshwaz (Full-dress gown), she introduced a very light dress called dudami which weighed just tow dams. Her panchotoliya, a scarf weighing only five tolas, too was a light substitute for a head cover or orhani.

Her farsh-i-chandni (White floor sheet) or sandalwood carped became very famous all the country and was available in different colours and designs. Some of theses designs are still renowned. Nur Jahan also laid down new patterns and elegant designs for many gold ornaments. She also designed inexpensive dress for marriage ceremonies and named it Nur Mahali which could be got for just Rs. 25 and was easily affordable for poor people. Nur Jahan was versatile, as only a very few of the great women of the world's courts have been. A hundred years after her death the fashions in dress she designed are still worn.

Nur Jahan was also an expert in the decoration apartments, palace and gardens. Nur jahan exhibited keen interest in the decoration of the inner apartments. With exquisites taste, vision of colour and care, she enhanced the magnificence of the Emperor's court. The expenditure was considerably curtailed by her superb art of household management. She made great improvement in the quality of furniture used in the royal apartments, introduced new royal fashions and etiquettes looking more dignified and colorful than those used before. She decorated the apartments with curtains, jhilmils, chilmans and chicks. The infusion of gold, silver and precious stones on pillars and the ceilings was seen everywhere. Nur Jahan decorated the spacious courtyards with marble, mosaic paintings and other inlaid decoration. She got them enclosed by gardens with water courses and fountains all round.

Nur Jahan invented new ways of arranging feasts and entertaining guests. Emperor Jahangir greatly appreciated her ability to arrange feasts perfectly, Jahangir in his memoirs mentioned several

occasions when feasts were arranged by Nur Jahan Begum. On the occasion of Shab-i-Barat, Nur Jahan organized a feast in one of her houses situated in the middle of large tanks. Jahangir also spoke of the wonderful feast he attended with his other ladies at Nur Afshan Garden

Once when Jahangir recovered from illness Nur Jahan, in great joy, arranged a grand feast and adorned the assembly with such care and skill that it astonished the beholders. Not only the apartments and gardens but the animals used by the Emperor Jahangir, were also adorned beautifully on festive occasions. Nur Jahan is credited with making the housing with various pieces of khwanposh (cover of trays), sent by the nobles, Jahangir was astonished to see such a beautiful covers on his elephants' body. She invented new patterns and new ways of decorating apartment buildings and arranging feasts.

The creativity of Nur Jahan was remarkably manifested in the invention of many scents. Her mother Asmat begum invented the Itra Gulab (rose perfume) known as itr-e-Jahangiri.

Nur Jahan, had proficiency in the art of singing and dancing. She patronized classical music and dance but disliked the prevalent cheap quality of royal entertainment in the harem. She tried to stop them and start healthy and classical music conferences of expert musicians. She composed and sang the songs in a melodious style. When she was unmarried, she often accompanied her mother to the royal zanana. Occasionally in these visits she sang and danced for many queens and princesses and delighted them all with her art, Nur Jahan was not only a gifted singer but also a poetess who composed beautiful lyrics.

Nur Jahan took keen interest in the construction of buildings, she built many sarais.

At her instance a house was built at Nur Sarai. Nur Jahan got a tomb constructed over the grave of her father Itimad-ud daula. It is an exquisite piece of art.

Bagh-i-Bahar Ara was laid out by the Nur Jahan Begum in 1623 A.D. The site of this garden was the western side of the Dal Lake at Sadurkhun. Achabals was one of the favourite resorts of Nur Jahan. Nur Bagh was also laid out by Nur Jahan on the eastern bank of the river Jhelum. Nur Jahan also provided patronage to several other gardens. Thus, Nur Jahan was a versatile lady, who contributed a great deal in the field of art and architecture.

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